



What Foods Are in the Protein Foods Group?

All foods made from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds are considered part of the Protein Foods Group. Beans and peas are also part of the Vegetable Group.

Select a variety of protein foods to improve nutrient intake and health benefits, including at least 8 ounces of cooked seafood per week. Young children need less, depending on their age and calorie needs. The advice to consume seafood does not apply to vegetarians. Vegetarian options in the Protein Foods Group include beans and peas, processed soy products, and nuts and seeds. Meat and poultry choices should be lean or low-fat.



Commonly eaten protein foods

Meats*

Lean cuts of:

- o beef
- o ham
- o lamb
- o pork
- o veal

Game Meats

- o bison
- o rabbit
- o venison

Lean Ground Meats

- o beef
- o pork
- o lamb

Lean luncheon or deli meats

Organ Meats

- o liver
- o giblets

Poultry*

- o chicken
- o duck
- o goose
- o turkey
- o ground chicken and turkey

Eggs*

- o chicken eggs
- o duck eggs

Beans and Peas

- o bean burgers
- o black beans
- o black-eyed peas
- o chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
- o falafel
- o kidney beans
- o lentils
- o lima beans (mature)
- o navy beans
- o pinto beans
- o soy beans
- o split peas
- o white beans

Processed Soy Products

- o tofu (bean curd made from soybeans)
- o veggie burgers
- o tempeh
- o texturized vegetable protein (TVP)

Nuts and Seeds*

- o almonds
- o cashews
- o hazelnuts (filberts)
- o mixed nuts
- o peanuts
- o peanut butter
- o pecans
- o pistachios
- o pumpkin seeds
- o sesame seeds
- o sunflower seeds
- o walnuts



Seafood*

Finfish such as:

- o catfish
- o cod
- o flounder
- o haddock
- o halibut
- o herring
- o mackerel
- o pollock
- o porgy

- o salmon
- o sea bass
- o snapper
- o swordfish
- o trout
- o tuna

Shellfish such as:

- o clams
- o crab
- o crayfish
- o lobster

- o mussels
- o octopus
- o oysters
- o scallops
- o squid (calamari)
- o shrimp

Canned fish such as:

- o anchovies
- o clams
- o tuna
- o sardines

*Selection Tips

- Choose lean or low-fat meat and poultry. If higher fat choices are made, such as regular ground beef (75 to 80% lean) or chicken with skin, the fat counts against your maximum limit for empty calories (calories from solid fats or added sugars).
- If solid fat is added in cooking, such as frying chicken in shortening or frying eggs in butter or stick margarine, this also counts against your maximum limit for empty calories (calories from solid fats and added sugars).
- Select some seafood that is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, trout, sardines, anchovies, herring, Pacific oysters, and Atlantic and Pacific mackerel.
- Processed meats such as ham, sausage, frankfurters, and luncheon or deli meats have added sodium. Check the Nutrition Facts label to help limit sodium intake. Fresh chicken, turkey, and pork that have been enhanced with a salt-containing solution also have added sodium. Check the product label for statements such as "self-basting" or "contains up to ___% of ___", which mean that a sodium-containing solution has been added to the product.
- Choose unsalted nuts and seeds to keep sodium intake low.